

Amesbury Open Space, Natural Resources, and Trails Committee
MEETING AGENDA
May 26, 2021, 7:00 p.m.



Present: Jonathan Sherwood, Chair, Steve Thiel, Rich Hucksam, Pascal Rettig, Vanessa Johnson-Hall, John Lopez, Conservation Agent

1. Call to Order - 7:02pm
2. Minutes from April 28, 2021 meeting. Move to approve: P. Rettig. 2nd S. Thiel. All approved by roll call.
3. Public Comment. N/A
4. Communications
 - City of Amesbury Annual Conflict of Interest Training – don't forget!
 - Return to In-Person meetings, starting June 15, 2021. City Hall will be available.
5. Chair's Report
 - a) A. Cleveland forwarded communication from resident who lives adjacent to Quimby Lane Conservation Area that was created as part of Quimby Lane subdivision cluster development. Lives on Elizabeth Lane; abuts conservation land. He had concerns about mountain biking on those trails and pointed to language in original deed that was restrictive about what could be permitted on the property.
 - This points to challenges of not having a management plan for conservation areas; no one entity in charge of signing land, no one regulating use.
 - b) J. Sherwood contacted by Lakes and Waterways about management plan at Battis Farm for farmer – whether there are adequate protections for grassland nesting birds and whether there is regulation over fertilizer application. There is a Draft management plan for Battis posted on Cons Comm website, focused on grassland bird nesting habitat – similar approach to Woodsom.
 - These are 2 great examples of things that go to heart of OSNRT mission. What's the best approach for responding?
 - J. Lopez: It's a discussion that Director of DPW should be involved with. It is an economic issue. Farmer mows fields at no cost to City but has to be mowed at certain times of the year. Fertilizer increases value of crop. DPW Director is amenable to direction. Grassland bird habitat is mowed according to plan.
 - Both Battis Farm and Quimby Lane Conservation Area are under care, custody and control of land, and thus there is a clear line of authority.
 - City will not likely have staff to oversee property management. Perhaps OSNRT can include this as a topic for community forum – brainstorm open space management issues that need addressing and invite community to brainstorm solutions.
 - g) June 7th Conservation Commission will discuss Lake Gardner NOI.
 - h) City wanted a Conservation 101 presentation for anyone interested – City staff, boards and Commissions. To be presented by Greenbelt on June 29th at the City Hall Auditorium. V. Johnson-Hall to present Conservation Options for municipalities.
6. Special Guests/Presentations: *None*.
7. Referrals – 2021-077 *An Order to Conserve City-owned Parcels for Open Space and Recreational Use*
 - Update: Order was submitted to City Council by the Mayor. Does 2 things: 1) lists parcels held by Tax Collector's office and transfers them out of Collectors to Care,

custody and control of Cons Comm, and 2) Transfers to Cons Comm for passive recreation and conservation purposes. Parcels will then have Article 97 protection.

- This is on Cons Comm agenda for June 7.
- Includes 2 parcels that were in Councilor Stanganelli's draft order for Town Forest.
- Move to recommend approval of Order 2021-077 made by V. Johnson-Hall, 2nd S. Thiel. All approved by roll call.
- Deeds will need to be recorded and MassGIS made aware of transfer to Cons Comm/Article 97 protection.

8. Ongoing Projects

OSR 2020-21 Action Plan

- i. Trails Planning – No update. Focus has been on other areas (see above).
- ii. Town Forest & Woodsom Farm Protections – No update. Councilors not present at meeting.
- iii. Outreach to Other Boards/Committees – Open Space Forum Part Two – No update.
- iv. Criteria and Methods for Permanently Protected Land Required as Part of a Development Permit – Johnson-Hall and Rettig to meet to make recommendation.
 1. Generally PB doesn't put conditions in for process for conserving land in permits.
 2. If conditions are outside of bylaws, then recommend amend bylaws.
 3. Nothing in bylaws appears to preclude having additional requirements on setting aside conservation land.
 4. Step one: look at neighboring communities that seem to be doing it well and what we can use as a model.
 - a. V. Johnson-Hall to find models in Newbury, Newburyport and West Newbury.
 - b. Some of it might not be in bylaws but in how conditioning permits. P. Rettig to research that in other municipalities.

9. Other Business:

- Discussion on expanding membership of OSNRT. J. Sherwood to look at original order and will discuss with Councilor N. Wheeler.
- J. Sherwood and R. Hucksam up for reappointment. Will likely be on June City Council agenda.

10. Motion to Adjourn 8:10pm by S. Thiel. 2nd R. Hucksam. All approved by roll call.